

vide some help to individuals and States in preparing for the dramatic restriction of access to benefits that legal immigrants will face under the welfare reform bill.

I am, however, extremely concerned about a provision in this bill that could lead to the Federal Government waiving the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act in order to expeditiously construct physical barriers and roads on the U.S. border. I know the Attorney General shares my commitment to those important environmental laws and will make every effort, in consultation with environmental agencies, to implement the immigration law in compliance with those environmental laws. I am also concerned about a provision that imposes a new "intent requirement" in unfair immigration-related employment cases that could place hardships on some U.S. citizens and permanent residents. I have asked the Attorney General to take steps to alleviate any potential discrimination that this provision causes against U.S. citizens and authorized workers—particularly Hispanics and Asian-Americans who, by their appearance or accent, may appear to be foreign. Finally, I will seek to correct provisions in this bill that are inconsistent with international principles of refugee protection, including the imposition of rigid deadlines for asylum applications.

The bill also makes important changes in the Nation's banking laws. It assures the continued soundness of the bank and thrift deposit insurance system, and it includes significant regulatory relief for financial institutions. At my insistence, the bill does not erode the protection of consumers and communities.

I commend Senators Baucus and Bingaman for raising the awareness of the issue of the proper accounting of highway trust fund receipts. In next year's reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act, my Administration will rely on a baseline that treats all States fairly and equitably.

The bill includes a Government-wide program to enable agencies to offer buyouts, through December 31, 1997, of up to \$25,000 to employees eligible for early or regular retirement. Many of these workers

stay on for years after they can retire, so buyouts will serve as an incentive for them to leave. Buyouts are an important tool to help Federal managers downsize their agencies as we continue to move toward a balanced budget—without relying solely on reductions-in-force (RIFs).

I am disappointed that one of my priorities—a ban on physician "gag rules"—was not included. Several States have passed similar legislation to ensure that doctors have the freedom to inform their patients of the full range of medical treatment options, and I am disappointed that the Congress was not able to reach agreement on this measure.

Nevertheless, this bill is good for America. As I have said, it moves us down the path toward a balanced budget while protecting our values. It provides the needed resources to fight domestic and international terrorism. And it cracks down on illegal immigration while protecting legal immigrants.

I am pleased to sign it.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
September 30, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 3610, approved September 30, was assigned Public Law No. 104-208. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 1.

### **Message to the Senate Transmitting the Inter-American Convention on Serving Criminal Sentences Abroad** *September 30, 1996*

*To the Senate of the United States:*

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Inter-American Convention on Serving Criminal Sentences Abroad, drawn up by the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs within the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) and composed of representatives of the Member States. The Convention was adopted and opened for signature at the twenty-third regular session of the General Assembly meeting in Managua, Nicaragua, on June 9, 1993, and signed on behalf of the United States at the OAS Headquarters in

Washington on January 10, 1995. The provisions of the Convention are explained in the report of the Department of State that accompanies this message.

Although the United States is already a party to the multilateral Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, which entered into force for the United States, following Senate advice and consent to ratification, on July 1, 1985, only two other OAS Member States have become parties to that Convention. Ratification of the Inter-American Convention on Serving Criminal Sentences Abroad would help fill a void by providing a mechanism for the reciprocal transfer of persons incarcerated in prisons in OAS Member States, to permit those individuals to serve their sentences in their home countries. A multilateral prisoner transfer convention for the Americas would also reduce, if not eliminate, the need for the United States to negotiate additional bilateral prisoner transfer treaties with countries in the hemisphere.

I recommend that the Senate promptly give its advice and consent to the ratification of this Convention, subject to an understanding and a reservation that are described in the accompanying State Department report.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
September 30, 1996.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 1.

### **Remarks Prior to Discussions With Middle East Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters**

*October 1, 1996*

#### **Middle East Summit**

**The President.** Wait, wait. Relax, everybody. We came here to end the violence, not aggravate it. [Laughter] Let's get everybody in. Is everyone in? Let me say first that I am delighted to have King Hussein, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and Chairman Arafat here. I thank them for coming.

We have had some good conversations already. This is our first meeting, all four of us, together. But I think, with their presence

here, it clearly symbolizes our commitment to end the violence and to get the peace process going again. We've come a long way in the last 3 years. No one wants to turn back. And I'm personally quite gratified by this opportunity to have the chance to visit with them, and I thank them for coming.

**Q.** Mr. Prime Minister, are you ready to abide by your previous promise to abide by the peace agreements already made by Israel?

**Prime Minister Netanyahu.** Absolutely. And our commitment to peace is also evident in the fact that we took up the President's kind offer, important offer, to come here and to try to put the peace process back on track. This is what we're doing together.

**Q.** Mr. Prime Minister, is there any prospect at all of your accepting some sort of international commission of experts, archaeologists, religious leaders, to take a look at what you've done by opening up this tunnel, to simply reassure everyone that there is no potential violation of Muslim holy places?

**Prime Minister Netanyahu.** You know our position, and I don't think it would be wise to open up a discussion here. But I have a question for you: Don't you have questions for the other—

**Q.** Yes. Mr. President—

**The President.** We don't want to do a whole press conference here, we're just trying to—

**Q.** Mr. President, have you had a chance to consider the King's suggestion of an independent commission to look at this problem and possibly cool tempers that way and come up with some sort of a bridging proposal?

**The President.** Let me say again, this is our first opportunity to all meet together, and one of the things that I have learned over the last several years is that anything any of us say publicly could undermine our ability to make progress, which is the ultimate objective of this meeting. So I don't want to make any premature comments here until we have a chance to visit with each other and do some more work. We're going to work today, we're going to work tomorrow, and then I'll be glad to answer any questions that you may have.

**Q.** Thank you, Mr. President.